

## Book Reviews

### *Trafficked Children and Youth in the United States: Reimagining Survivors*



Elżbieta M. Goździak

New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2016, 141 pp.

This book is an important contribution to recent feminist studies critical of the social and political underpinnings of the predominant “anti-trafficking” movement based in the United States. As Goździak so carefully details, the “movement” is a coordinated, networked system of politicians and advocacy centres who work to identify and provide rehabilitative services to youth survivors of human trafficking. This network is far from expertly driven, often reactive to the moral panics that dominate policy forums on human trafficking, forced migration, and labour exploitation. Goździak indicates that she is not interested in debating the definition of “trafficking” itself but in how it is operationalized: how the label of “child trafficking” may or may not “work” for survivors according to U.S. and international law. Goździak complicates the sense that there is any “typical” child victim of trafficking, by interviewing and narrating victims’ own contestations of how and when the “trafficked child” label might be applied to them.

Goździak treats the subject matter with a delicate yet deft touch. She is clearly aware of the stakes at play—how naming and intervention forged at the bureaucratic level can have profound, irreversible impact on the lived realities of the youth in question. This attention renders Goździak’s work remarkable: from the outset she foregrounds the complex narratives of youth who have arrived in the United States under less than ideal circumstances. Through fieldwork at anti-trafficking conferences, as well as in-depth qualitative interviews with 140 youth recipients of anti-trafficking services, Goździak narrates a portrayal of survivorship outside the prevalent imagery of trafficking survivors as hapless young victims. She notes many of the victims in her study take issue with being labelled children: as minors transported to work in the United States, many of the youth were classified as victims of trafficking despite their insistence to caseworkers that they had chosen to migrate of their own accord.

Goździak’s citation practices make clear her political stance on this polarizing issue. She joins a small but ardent group of feminist academics (myself included) who draw from critical race studies, post-colonial studies, and critical political economy to call attention to what they perceive as a wave of neo-conservative measures ostensibly aimed at punishing trafficking while in fact upholding heavily carceral and often racist policies against migration and mobility. This body of scholarship has focused predominantly on two groups in North American and Western European countries as proponents of anti-trafficking policy—evangelical Christians and secular feminists who have found common cause in their “abolitionist” stance against sex trafficking through a categorical disavowal of sex work as a form of labour.

Goździak contributes to this critique by arguing that “child trafficking is operationalized unevenly and perhaps even capriciously” (29) with regards to the levels of assistance actually afforded to victims. Her study focuses attention to a third group of actors, the advocates, service providers, and social workers affiliated with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services who process individual child-trafficking cases. She takes care to acknowledge her positionality as an ongoing independent consultant for the Office of Refugee Resettlement, a perspective that puts Goździak in the role of both researcher and erstwhile service provider to the youth she interviews.

Goździak describes a disjuncture between service providers’ and researchers’ understandings of kinship networks in both trafficking and anti-trafficking processes: “Policymakers, child advocates, and service providers maintained a studied blindness toward the complicated role family and kin play in facilitating and financing the migration journeys of children and adolescents to the United States” (58). Services for youth labelled as “unaccompanied refugee minors” often discount youth requests for reunification with their families

overseas or within the United States if any family member was suspected to have been involved in the trafficking of that child and therefore a potential criminal. Goździak expresses frustration at how law enforcement and policymakers posit that illegal migration is linked to sophisticated organized crime syndicates; her research, and that of others, shows that the majority of the youth did not perceive their families as traffickers, nor did these families belong to any organized criminal chains. This carceral attitude casts a shadow upon the provision of social services after “rescue”; by labelling victims’ families as “criminals,” police and social-service providers lose victim trust, a profound misstep in victim rehabilitation and integration into wider society.

Goździak further argues that policymakers’ and advocates’ reports of trafficking overwhelmingly portray sexual exploitation, “being chained to a brothel bed,” as the predominant harm to trafficked youth: “Pictures of sexually exploited girls summon more sympathy than descriptions of trafficked men toiling in the fields for a pittance to put tomatoes and lettuce in our salad bowls” (68). As Goździak’s case studies show, while many youth had experienced sexual abuse before or during their migration journeys, most were caught up in other forms of labour exploitation and did not identify as sex-trafficking victims unless prompted by their case managers.

Perhaps the most compelling section is the concluding chapter situating trafficking survivorship in the context of social studies of childhood. The image of a supposedly monolithic “trafficked child” is a fallacy that Goździak ardently challenges. Her critical feminist attention to the cultural, racial, and classed dimensions of how youth from different regions perceive their own agency and resiliency is a crucial argument toward adapting rehabilitative services to more comprehensively serve young people who have been exploited but do not identify as victims or as children.

This book is notable for its accessibility and is written largely without pretence or jargon, despite the ambitious scope. It will serve as a useful, comprehensive introduction for scholars of migration studies, cultural anthropology, and related fields. Goździak’s work is a welcome addition to the critical study of anti-trafficking institutions and services, a nuanced and compassionate portrayal of the complex lived realities of young people who move and migrate, however precariously, in search of better opportunities and futures.

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***Bread from Stones:  
The Middle East and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism***



Keith David Watenpaugh

Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2015, 272 pp.

**T**his is a very timely and carefully researched contribution to the literature that has emerged to mark the centenary of the First World War. The title alone lays the foundation for its subject matter: the desperation of people (especially children) caught up in war, poverty, deprivation, massacres, death marches, and genocide. The reference to bread and stones is not only attributed to the New Testament, but also can be found in Armenian, Turkish, and Arabic folklore. With this backdrop, Watenpaugh draws the reader into his text by prefacing the two beginnings of his work: first, a humanitarian report by Karan Jeppe, written in Baalbeck, Lebanon, in 1922, after the collapse of efforts to repatriate the vast population of Armenian refugees to their homelands in Anatolia; and second, a friendship with Ann Z. Kerr who introduced Watenpaugh to the work of her father-in-law, Stanley E. Kerr, in *Near East Relief* and his book, *The Lions of Marash* (1975), along with other family archives, letters, photographs, and memoirs.

*Bread from Stones* was written as the modern Middle East descended into a humanitarian disaster that, in the degree of suffering and international complicity as well as indifference, resembles what occurred during and following the First World War. It is tempting to draw parallels between past and present: the immense flows of forced migrants across international borders, the even larger scale of internally displaced people, the drive to contain the population in the region of conflict, and the rise of smuggling, trafficking, and sexual violence across the Middle East. As Watenpaugh reflects, these “echoes resound across the same territories of inhumanity and humanitarian response” (xv).

This book explores the role of humanitarianism in the history of human rights in the twentieth century and addresses how the concept of shared humanity informed bureaucratic, social, and legal humanitarian practices. While humanitarianism existed before the early twentieth century that Watenpaugh addresses in this book, in previous periods